THE GOVERNMENT'S CONSERVATOR OF CHILDREN

The Head of the National Baby Bureau, Miss Julia C. Lathrop, Is the Woman Who "Cleaned Up" the Crooked Charities of Illinois

Photo by Matzene, Chicago

Miss Julia C. Lathrop, of Hull House, Who Heads the Government's Baby Bureau

THE government having decided on its children's bureau—people promptly began to call it the baby bureau—had pretty well made up its mind as to the woman who should be at the head of it.

There were other women already possessed of creditable records in that field; but the one woman whose broad experience and very active participation in public affairs made it evident that she ought to be the directing spirit was identified with the work of Hull House, in Chicago.

She is Miss Julia C. Lathrop, who has proved herself one of those indefatigable spirits in charity administration and reform that never fail to leave a trail behind them of good works and clean, very clean, management.

She is far from being the child specialist only. While her labors have been long and intimate in that special field, she has commanded the respectful admiration of all Illinois for her courageous and incisive efforts for mitigating the brutalities of treatment accorded the insane, and she has made studies of conditions abroad that enable her to discern readjustments needed at home with an insight few, if any, other women possess.

Her character, her career and her views gain, of course, an unusual importance because it is to her that the United States government has chosen to intrust the formation of this new, vitally valuable branch of its supervision over the welfare of the future men and women who shall constitute the American nation. But in themselves, without any enhancement of position or prestige, they read like the adventures and the views of a feminine Bayard.

LIKE many among the newer generation of social workers, Miss Lathrop is a college woman—Vassar, for hers. She came of a parentage that afforded her some home insight at least into the tortuous mazes of politics, for she is the daughter of Congressman William Lathrop; and a congressman's daughter shouldn't stand in the awe of politicians or the ignorance of politics that dismay other girls, and college girls at that.

Her type is that of the intensely devoted mother, such as can be seen any day among either the rich or the poor. A writer dealing with the reformation of conditions in Chicago once classed her among five maiden aunts the town rejoiced to be bossed by. That was a paraphrase of a remark by a prominent Chicagoan who was a good deal of a boss himself, so much of a boss that he had felt most painfully the energetic campaign of the quintet of maiden aunts he was specifying. The way he put it, Chicago, whatever annoyances its proper bosses and contractors might feel, was in big luck to have such aunts refraining from their natural office of motherhood and letting their instincts keep them busy coddling Chicago sore throats with flannel bandages.

They included Miss Lathrop, Jane Addams, Jr., Cornelia De Bey, Miss Margaret A. Haley and Miss Mary McDowell—none of them a boss in any sense of the word, all of them looked upon by the real political bosses with that feeling of mingled apprehension and wrath which distinguishes your true boss in the presence of a boss-breaker.

More pronouncedly than in the avocations to which her zeal for humanity has led her, Miss Lathrop has been identified with Miss Addams and that famous woman's work in Hull House. She lives there, and is one of Miss Addams' closest friends. Now Miss Addams has there, passing in constant review, all the types of a great city, from high-browed professors and solid industrial magnates to poor but independent working girls and poorer, less independent immigrants. Some of them—the young working women—are there as regular visitors, for Hull House is their clubhouse; the others come and go, as the varied activities of Hull House call them or interest them. These activities have been the regular home atmosphere of Miss Addams' friend and co-operator, Miss Lathrop, for so long that they are like the breath of her life.

And so, too, is the pet work of Miss Addams, the care of the children. From babyhood, when the pasteurized milk won for them by Miss Addams has helped them over the rocky road of "infantile diseases," and in their school days the children are now under care such as was not hoped for in Chicago before the advent of these women and the advent of the juvenile court. And afterward the child labor laws they fought for furnish additional safeguards until boys and girls emerge into young manhood and womanhood, able to care for themselves.

A MILITANT WORKER

Miss Lathrop's activities have, however, been more militant and at the same time more concerned with the misfortunes of the poor—the direst misfortunes in which helplessness was made torture through the greed and brutality of men.

Politics used to control Illinois' almshouses, insane asylums and official hospitals; the consequences on the inmates were as terrible as have been the consequences of such systems everywhere else. Miss Lathrop, her girlish soul startled into horror at some intimations she heard regarding the conditions that prevailed, suspected that some honest, sincere investigation would reveal many truths which had been long and systematically ignored. She became one of the earliest muckrakers, for she did a lot of raking and there was a lot of muck. She did it herself, too. She went into those institutions, slept there, ate the food the patients got, saw and heard how they were treated. But one thing she didn't do: she refrained from trying to capture the notoriety of her investigations.

She possessed the rare gift of doing her good by stealth—something almost impossible to accomplish in scandals, where the very essence of reform lies in the authentication of the charges brought. Yet she succeeded in large measure by employing the very agent which most promotes notoriety—the press. Of course it was her only weapon, her one ally, she had to get the facts before the public, and the newspapers were the sole means of presenting them.

There was that in her personality, in her sincere disclaimers of any desire for fame or credit and in her exceptional cleverness in handling men which fairly compelled editors, no matter how keenly they gauged the value of an article that should tell about her, to accept her facts and forego mention of the fact-finder.

But in American life no one can perform a task which in itself is sensational—and the abuses of the Illinois state charities proved highly sensational—without incurring some prominence. Miss Lathrop was forced into public view under the alternative of having her facts denied and her labors frustrated. The result was her membership in the state board of charities. Illinois supposed that with such a protector of its poor right on the board of control there would be no more political tricks played with them. The delusion lasted until the state administration tried to pull off one of the familiar political jobs against which Miss Lathrop had fought so hard. She felt that she could not muster the authority to stop it, but she knew she could refuse to participate in it. That meant her resignation from a board that was powerless against political aggression.

Resign she did; but not silently. She resigned with a letter that rasped off the indurated hides of the place-seekers and self-seekers who would rob a pauper of his food and a lunatic of his sleep. That letter, like a burst of sunlight in the dark corners of every state charitable institution, revealed all the neglect and abuse that had been practiced on the helpless by the greedy. It made the state wards the issue of a state campaign. It brought a real and decisive victory for the cause of the indigent and the insane, and the victory brought Miss Lathrop back to the board of charities.

While she was giving herself to the welfare of the poor, the subject of the care of the American child had been developing into a national problem, with ramifications in every state and with direct interest for every parent. Miss Lathrop had been one of the most earnest and effective advocates of the juvenile court law in Illinois, and she has been a very energetic vice president for the Juvenile Protective Association.

So she was not only in constant touch with Miss Addams' work, but she was, next to her, probably the most influential factor in the protection of the young in her native state.

Both Miss Lathrop and Miss Addams, early as they have been in the field of child protection, represent the strictly modern stage in the evolution of a great national idea, born in the last century in Massachusetts, the first of the commonwealth to give some form of "state aid" to children, yet itself, while leading the movement, largely influenced by the growing sentiment of the neighboring New England communities. For a long time the state's initiative in protecting the child by active agencies was rated, elsewhere in the country, as one of those advanced "New England ideas," to be taken pretty cautiously.

The Massachusetts tendency, at the beginning, was to be encouraging rather than disciplinary—to aid in education in means of self-support and in direct protection of the child against the dangers arising in everyday life—neglect by parents, abuse, overwork, whatever invades the child's inherent right to health, education and moral development.

But experience revealed deeper ramifications of the subject. Child direction in itself assumed the importance of a science, and populations, growing and changing under the influence of successive tides of immigration, were raising the child, throughout the entire east, to a level of importance unparalleled in earlier history. Pennsylvania and New York were seeking to meet one aspect of the problem through societies to protect children from cruelty, through advanced methods in public schools and through various private institutions and organizations; they aimed to control the other, that of child discipline, by means of reformatories and compulsory education.

The New England communities meanwhile were progressing along lines steadily broadening in scope and results. Women like Clara Temple Leonard, Elizabeth C. Putnam and Adelaide A. Calkins, in Massachusetts, were promoting much-needed industrial schools.

In the south the question of child labor, when the general movement had been fairly defined, grew into one of the issues of the times.

Clara Temple Leonard — Elizabeth C. Putnam — Adelaide A. Calkins

Pioneers in the State Conservation of Children in Massachusetts

The whole country was awakening to the significance of the old saying, "The boy is father to the man"; it was adding the corollary, "The girl is mother to the woman"; it was realizing that the children of the present are the nation of the future.

But the establishment of the national children's bureau, long needed, long advocated, presented one grave difficulty—the problem of securing the right person to meet the diverse and delicate questions which must arise in such an all-embracing department. It was here that Miss Lathrop's varied experience, her practical knowledge of the bearings of the law and her conspicuous courage, together with her exceptional tact, combined to make her precisely the woman for the place.

Her views on many aspects of our American life, which have bearing more or less direct on the well-being of children all over the country, afford a valuable insight into the character of the woman who is to carry such weighty responsibilities, and such novel ones.

When she reviewed the probation system of Chicago she was generous in her examples from actual life; she was just in her attribution of probation's origin in Massachusetts; she was thorough in her analysis of conditions as they are, and she was fearless in her suggestions for the future.

"It might be said," she observed, "that it is too soon to begin to muddle our minds with superficial statistics of results. We can hold fast to the sound principle which substitutes human interest and preserving care over individuals, for the costly and unproductive system of fine and imprisonment. A generation hence may be able to trace a line of genuine, constructive effectiveness. In detail, perhaps, the mechanism could be strengthened by such means as the following:

"The enforcing of the doctrine of adult responsibility.

"The assumption by the proper civic unit of the cost and control of all the officers of the court and of the detention home; always with adequate guarantee against political interference.

"Extension of the age under which cases could be considered.

"Formal discharges by the court when justified.

"The provision of a fund by private benevolence to board out children, temporarily, under probation officers, and to supplement in other ways the officers' efforts when required."

Here was a practical criticism of the probation system as it obtained in Chicago when she wrote her study of its workings, which was based on numberless cases of children that come under her own eyes. It was not theorizing; it was intensely practical. It has proved so practical that, in various cities of the United States, as the probation system spread, one or more of her suggestions have been put into practice.

STUDIED IN EUROPE

Her attitude toward the poor—and her new work will have much to do with children whose circumstances make them objects of some care, direct or indirect, on the part of the national government—is significant. In the course of her investigations on the treatment of the insane she made studies in Europe, and so brought back with her a vast array of information applying to conditions of the poor abroad. This valuable knowledge now comes to the service of the government and the children of the United States; but what is of even a higher worth is the perfectly open, unbiased mind which its possessor brings to bear upon any subject she applies herself to. In her European studies—they embraced Glasgow, Copenhagen, Munich and Florence—she seemed to be moved neither by misleading patriotism for her own land nor by the prejudice which it would be natural to feel after her shocking discoveries in her own state. She is just fair to all. Thus, she says of the European attitude toward the insane:

"The manner in which an individual believed to be insane is first taken care of by the authorities and sent to the proper hospital is much alike in these three very unlike towns—Copenhagen, Munich and Florence. It is of interest to us because it shows practical expedients for treating the insane from the beginning as sick people who are to be put in charge of doctors and nurses, without unnecessary police intervention and without detention in police stations or jails. The system is nowhere perfect, nor even as good as we might have with a little effort; but it is far better than the system we have in most American towns. The significant features of these plans are that the insane are treated as patients from the start, with as little police intervention as possible; and that in each one of these cities there is a special hospital for receiving insane patients. Nowhere in Europe, I believe, is the actual nursing care of patients better than in those American hospitals which have put trained nurses in charge. Personally, I have seen no hospital, save the one in Copenhagen, which seemed to a non-professional eye to approximate our best hospitals in this regard.

"It is in the critical moment of commitment, of withdrawing from the patient—often reluctant or suspicious or violent—his most precious possession, his own right of self-direction, that we need most of all to emphasize the doctor and the nurse and to substitute instantly the hospital for the prison. Here our American methods can be improved, and by the use of the public health officials in both city and country we can eliminate entirely the need of even such employment of the police as still prevails. The new law of the state of New York, placing health officers in charge of commitment of the insane, is a splendid beginning."

The children of the insane may prove to be but a minor feature of the work of the new children's bureau at Washington—may not occupy any conspicuous place in its duties at all. But the open and frank intelligence which enabled Miss Lathrop to discern the merits and shortcomings of commitment systems here and abroad will be of untold service when applied to the doubtful questions of practice and expediency which must continually arise in such a government work, with the mass of them coming at the very outset.

It was for that very openness and freedom from prejudice that Miss Lathrop became the inevitable appointee.

The "Poor Man's Cow" for the Rich

YOU take the hungry little mite, swathed against any whiff of air that may give the dreaded chill, with both your hands under it, one supporting the head and the other aided by the forearm in carrying the body.

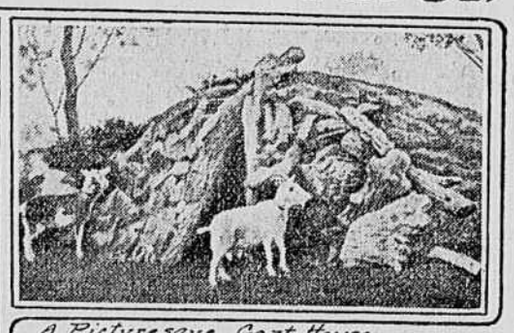
Then you slip it under the nanny, in position so that the mouth comes just where nanny's kid would expect to find its natural meal.

And how the baby will draw on that refreshing fount of life! Its infantile brain may be too young to make comparisons, but there is some sort of an instinct in palate and stomach which promptly convinces the human baby that a nanny goat wet nurse beats the nippled bottle all hollow.

This country, following Europe's lead, has been going on the fool principle that the milch goat, because it needn't cost much, is the poor man's cow; and it has had that fool notion in its national head ever since the government imported sixty-eight Maltese goats seven years ago and turned them over to the Connecticut Agricultural State College, at Storrs, Conn., for breeding and experiment. The idea was promulgated then that the milch goat was the poor man's natural born cow; and it stuck for a long time.

But the rich have been learning so much about honest nanny, from the doctors and from experience of the sanatoriums in Europe, where milk cures are a specialty, that they've rebelled at last. They can't see why the poor should have all the advantages of goat's milk while they put up with pedigreed cows.

Direct from the Source



A Picturesque Goat House

THE governments of the world are devoting more attention to nanny than ever before. It is a case of discovering a prize that was always within arm's reach.

The peasantries of the various lands of Europe have known the goat as their familiar and well-beloved friend; but the governments of late have been elevating her to the dignity of statistics. Asia, at least that extensive territory of it controlled by the Turks, has cherished the goat from the time of Father Abraham down to the present. And nobody has yet found faithful nanny untrue to her high office.

About the large and copious cow the controversies of transmissible tuberculosis might rage until both cows and babies perished; but they never affected the goat. Perhaps it is possible to infect a goat with tuberculosis, but there are no cases known where goats had the disease, or where they could possibly have transmitted it. France has 30,000 babies on record whose food was goat's milk; and only a few showed symptoms of consumption, so few that it was apparent the disease was contracted from some other sources and then encountered subjects rendered almost immune by the diet they had thriven on. Germany, which had 2,000,000 goats twenty years ago, is believed to have 4,000,000 now, with the total value of goats and products amounting to $65,000,000. There, every village and hamlet has its goat common, frequented by the goat population during the hours when they are not on duty in their respective homes. The German nanny is often trained to come to the house several times a day and take her stand at a place convenient for the baby.

Hard to do? Why, it is as a foster mother that gentle nanny shines. She'll adopt anything. She's not discriminating or proud. She'll condescend to a human infant with the same maternal interest she shows for any baby pig, which is infinitely more dexterous in milking her, and does the job thoroughly—no minor consideration to a lady goat who knows what comfort is.

England has devoted considerable experiment to the production of good milkers; and this country is just beginning to comprehend that the once maligned goat is fit to be the foster mother of the nation.

The Swiss goats are, perhaps, the best known breeds of Europe; the bill-poster goat—meaning the back-lot goat that dines on ballet girls—is about the only one popularly known here. Between those extremes lies health, wealth and all the virtues one can imagine from a foster mother who must be the result of careful breeding in the future. The famous Saanen and the Toggenburg breeds, best known of the Swiss varieties, have already a foothold in the United States; there is a goat breeders' association; there are now even milk dealers who make a specialty of goat's milk.

The wealthy fanciers of the new dairy queen are, of course, indulging themselves and their heirs in only the finest strain; and some, on their country places, erect special goat houses that are designed to be the acme of beauty and comfort.

But nanny doesn't need so much coddling. Naturally, she is a rustler of the rustlers. She enjoys a diet of bushes and revels in a feast of weeds. Alfalfa and oats make pretty nearly an ideal diet for her, from the point of view of the scientific feeder; and, now that we are beholding wealth and fashion ready to save sickly, ill-nourished heirs through the medium of the poor man's cow, the market for extra good milch goats should transform into a science the breeding and feeding, which, commonly, have been matters of chance and hard scratching.

The merits presented by the goat as a milk giver are numerous; but none of them equals in importance the characteristic smallness of the fat globules. They are so fine that their admixture with the watery content of the liquid is all but absolute, and thus, in mechanical texture, goat's milk is the nearest to a perfect substitute for mother's milk that a child can drink. The large fat globules in cow's milk, which so readily form cream and then butter, make that food far more difficult for the weak child stomach to assimilate. In goat's milk the cream just won't rise, that's all.

MORE EASILY DIGESTED

The fat in cow's milk averages about 3 per cent. Tests show that goat's milk runs from 4.6 to 6.9 per cent of fat, and that the much higher quantity is more easily digested.

The yield per day of a nanny that is rated serviceable is not less than two quarts. Many do better than that. German records show large numbers of milch goats that give three and four quarts per day. These amounts, when the size of the animal and the relatively small volume of food consumed are studied, make the goat vastly more profitable than the cow.

With all these virtues, nanny has the merit of providing milk for coffee and cooking that makes the cow's brand look cheap. A few drops go as far as a spoonful of cream, and the flavor is rarely rich and smooth. The old idea that the milk can't help smelling "strong" was long ago exploded by the simple discovery that its very richness and delicacy make it highly susceptible to odors. So first the bucks were excluded from the milking places of the does, and next a rule of impeccable cleanliness was adopted for all goat dairies. The outcome is, of course, that goat's milk is far more clean when it reaches the consumer than cow's milk, unless the cows have been lodged in model dairies and have been handled with the most scientific care.